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Oil and Gas Applications for Permit to Drill

Indicator: Number of Oil and Gas Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) approved from October 1, 1996, through March 3, 2000, by BLM field office. All APDs approved on federal and Indian lands are included. The vast majority are APDs approved on BLM surface lands, followed by Indian, split estate, and National Forest System lands.

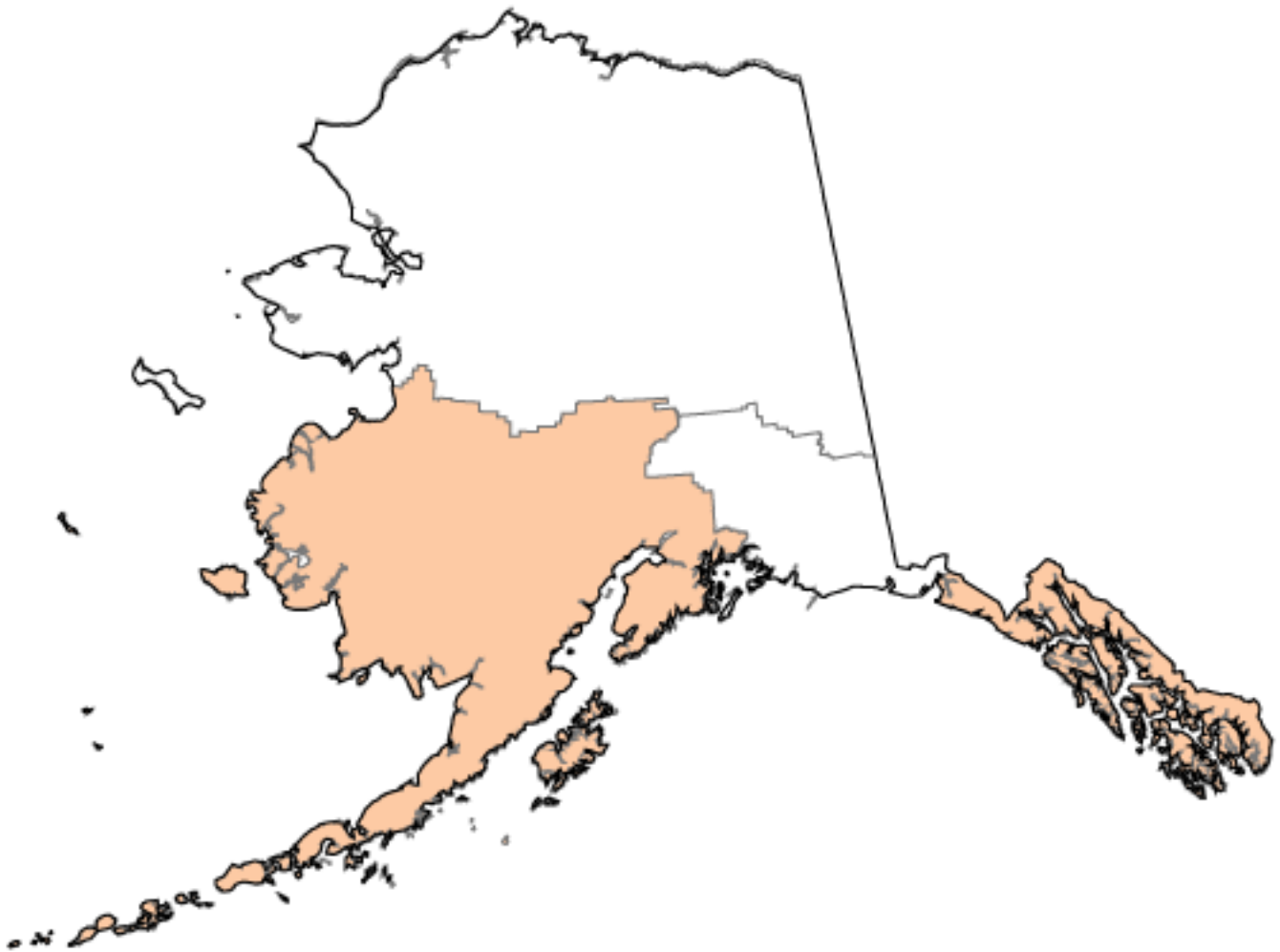
Key Findings: This indicator roughly reveals the level of impacts that are occurring on federally-managed mineral estate due to new oil and gas exploration. Surface disturbance includes well pad, road and pipeline construction. While uncommon, environmental impacts could include possible groundwater contamination by drilling fluids, oil spills, blowouts and fires. There is a less direct correlation with post-drilling impacts that may occur. Hot spots in Wyoming, Utah, and northwestern New Mexico reflect a surge in drilling coalbed methane wells. California has experienced increased activity due to royalty rate reductions for heavy oil and stripper wells. Southeast New Mexico's activity is due to conventional oil well drilling and has been consistently high for some time.

Limitations: Most but not all APDs result in actual drilling operations. Of those, a highly variable percentage are completed for production; the remainder are plugged and abandoned and the well pads and roads reclaimed. Wells drilled from APDs approved on BLM-managed mineral estate are a small percentage of oil and gas development on private and state minerals, which generally have greater environmental and economic impacts. Activity from year to year can be highly variable. The 3.5 year time period shown was used to smooth out that variation. This interval was also chosen to coincide with the period of high confidence in the reported numbers, beginning shortly after the initial implementation of the database.

Source: BLM Automated Fluid Minerals Support System (AFMSS). These data are entered by 31 BLM field offices and updated as activity warrants, often on a daily basis. Good data for APD and other operations activities are available from shortly after AFMSS implementation to the present.

Comments: Other indicators that could be used include total number of active wells, wells actually started (spudded), wells completed for production, or number of operator non-compliance incidents or accidents that result in surface impacts.

Oil and Gas



Applications for Permit to Drill Approved
on Federal and Indian Lands
by BLM Field Office between
10/1/1996 and 3/3/2000



Scale 1:15,000,000

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